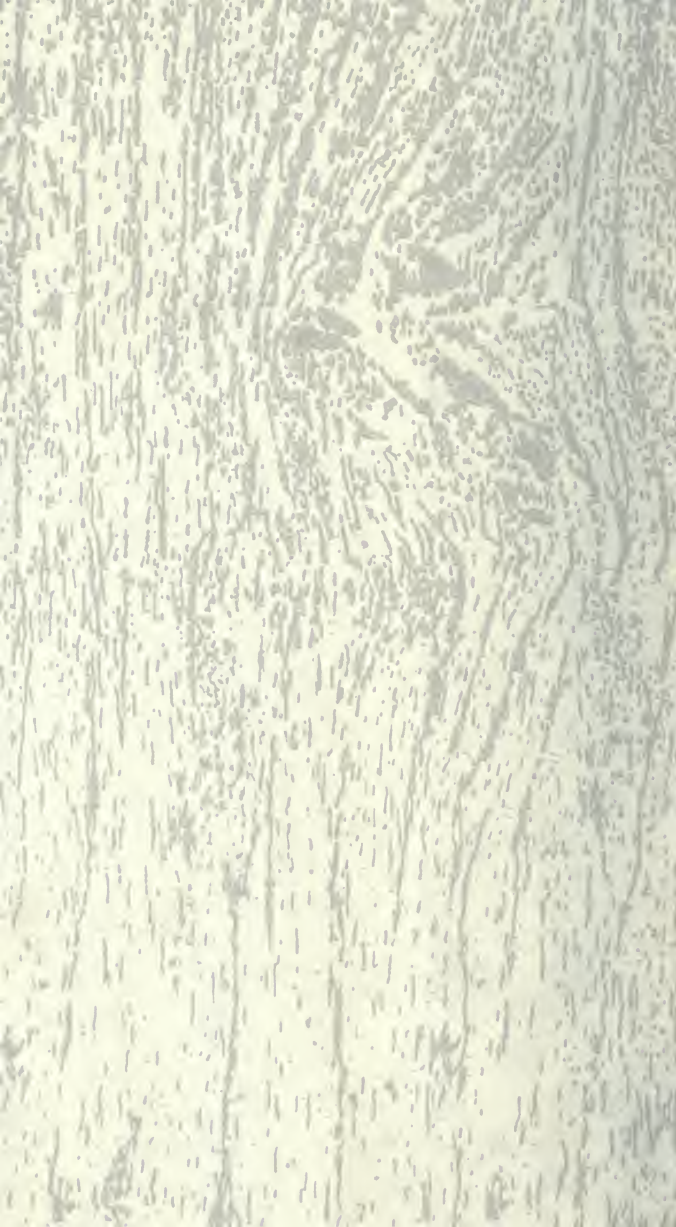


Leeds Church Institute.

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(Rule 25.)



RIGHTEOUSNESS AND REDEMPTION.

A SERMON,

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL MINTON, M.A.

“BRETHREN, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”—ROMANS x. 1—4.

THE Apostle is here speaking of his countrymen generally at that particular time. Some of them, “the remnant according to the election of grace,” had *both* zeal and knowledge, having been converted to the faith of Christ, that is, having given up all attempts to establish their own righteousness, and submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Others of them, doubtless, had *neither* zeal nor knowledge, being altogether careless and indifferent about religion. But the aspect, presented by the nation at large, was zeal without knowledge,—the true definition both of superstition and of bigotry; of superstition in our dealings with God, of bigotry in our dealings with one another. They were very earnest religionists, but their religion was a false one. They were very anxious to be saved, but they knew not the way of salvation. They tried to serve God, but they knew not how alone He *could* be served. They still rested in their typical observances, and rejected Him, whose coming had fulfilled them. That fulfilment they would not see. And in wilful ignorance of the everlasting righteousness, which Christ had wrought out for all who would believe in Him, they persisted in vainly going about to establish their own righteousness, by zeal for their now abrogated Law. They could not, from their own unbelief, “steadfastly look to the end of that which was abolished,” which “end,” we are here told, was Christ.

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Now this going about to establish our own righteousness is the certain result of zeal without knowledge. Wherever you find religious feelings excited in any person who is unacquainted with the only true religion which God has revealed to fallen man, you will invariably find that person endeavouring to establish his own righteousness. In fact, there is nothing else for him to do. What else *can* a man do, who knows of no other righteousness? It matters not whether he may never have heard of the righteousness provided for him in Christ, or whether having heard of it, he does not understand it; or whether understanding it, he refuses to accept it. The result is the same in every case; he is driven back upon himself to establish his own righteousness. The ways in which he attempts to do this, may differ from one another as much as the most refined Unitarian morality differs from the deepest superstitions of Hindooism and Romanism; or as the Church-going and sacrament-going of the most rigid formalist among ourselves, differ from the Levitical sacrifices and ceremonials of the unbelieving Jews. But the principle is precisely the same in all. And the consequences are precisely the same. If you are going about to establish your own righteousness, either by religious observances, or virtuous conduct, or anything else, you have as yet no interest in the only righteousness that can be of any avail to you, the righteousness of God. Do not be deluded into the popular notion, that it is very little matter what a man's religion is, provided he is only sincere in it. If sincerity alone could save, the unbelieving Jews would have been saved; for Paul "bare them record, that they had a zeal of God;" they were perfectly sincere in their endeavours to establish their own righteousness. But did that ensure their salvation? No; it hindered their salvation. It was the very thing Paul wanted them to *give up*, in order to prepare the way for their salvation—"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they *might be* saved." To witness great zeal, and sincerity, and devotion, in one who is ignorant of the only way of access to God, must always create an anxiety about them in the mind of any real Christian, even more than is commonly felt about an

utterly careless person. However much we may wish for the conversion of the most irreligious, our heart's desire and prayer can scarcely fail to be called forth in a more peculiar manner for those who seem in earnest about their souls, but not according to knowledge,—that they may be shewn where alone the object of their search can be found. But we cannot permit these feelings to degenerate into a latitudinarian idea, that such persons are at present *in the way* of salvation. There is no way but *the way*. “Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved ;” and none other means of taking refuge under that name, but by a living faith. There is no way of obtaining any interest in the righteousness of God, but by *submitting* to it ; that is, submitting to be emptied of all trust in your own fancied righteousness ; submitting to see, and feel, and acknowledge yourself nothing ; submitting to be justified by the righteousness of another, convinced that you never can be justified by any righteousness of your own ; submitting to say even of those things wherein you have done right, “We are unprofitable servants, we have but done that which was our bare duty to do,” and confessing at the same time, “In many things we offend all ; we have done the things we ought not to have done, and left undone the things we ought to have done ; we have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” There is no mixing of grace and works in this matter. The Apostle argues peremptorily : “If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace ; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace ; otherwise work is no more work.” We cannot be wrapping ourselves round in our own righteousness, and have Christ's righteousness to make up what is deficient. He must be our entire covering, or He is nothing to us.

Now this is just the difficulty in persuading sinners to accept the righteousness offered them in the Gospel—to make them feel their *need* of it ; that is, to make them feel that they never *can* be justified by any righteousness of their own, and therefore that if they are ever to be justified at all, it must be by the righteousness of another. And

it is a difficulty which none but the Spirit of God can overcome. Argument may convince the intellect ; but only Divine grace can convince the heart. No amount of preaching, no, nor any amount of experience can of itself beat down the natural pride and self-righteousness of the carnal mind. "The preparation of the heart is *from the Lord*." He alone can plough up the fallow ground, and fit it for receiving the Gospel seed.

My dear friends, has that great work ever taken place in *your* hearts ? Have you ever been made to feel yourself really lost and ruined ? *hopelessly* lost, *irretrievably* ruined, as far as regards anything you could do to recover yourself ? Have you ever been made to feel the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the depth of your own sin ? Have you been made to smite upon your breast and say, "Behold I am vile ; I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. I owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay, and never *shall have* anything" ? If so, but not else, you will know how to value the amazing privilege here offered to every sinner who is willing to accept it, even that of having a righteousness imputed to him, which is so perfect that the very law of God itself can find no flaw in it, and so completely made over to him as his own, that clothed in it he may stand before God "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

And what *is* this righteousness ? It is called "the righteousness of God." But how is the righteousness of God made the *sinner's* righteousness ? We are told in the next words : "For *Christ* is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

The "end of the law" means the attainment of its object by the fulfilment of its demands. The original object of the law, as written in man's heart at his creation, to which the command not to eat of a particular tree was merely the outward appointed test of obedience, was to give life. "Do this and live." If man had done it, "righteousness would have been by the law." But the law having been once broken, it changed its whole character, and became "the ministration of condemnation," "the ministration of death." It could no longer "give life ;" because for

that purpose *perfect* obedience was required, which man in his fallen state could not yield. How then was its end to be gained? It *could* only be by the fulfilment of its demands; and those demands had been increased instead of lessened by the fall. For without abating one jot of the *obedience* which it had always required, it now demanded in addition the *penalty* of *disobedience*. So that for its end to be fulfilled in giving life to man, two things must be done: the full penalty of his disobedience must be paid; and the perfect obedience, previously required from him, must be rendered. And as it was from man that the law claimed this, *by man* it must be done. And by man it *was* done: for Christ is as very man as He is very God. So that while the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily gave a Divine character and efficacy, an infinite value, to all He did, making His righteousness to be indeed "the righteousness of God," it was as *the seed of the woman* He bruised the serpent's head, man regaining what man had lost. For which reason He is called "the second man;" that is, the second covenant head and representative of mankind.

Thus we see how the righteousness of God can be imputed to us,—because it is the righteousness of *man* also. It was wrought out by a man, who through His union with the Godhead was able to make full satisfaction to Divine justice for man's sin, and also to render such a meritorious righteousness, as should earn for His people that reward of eternal life, which would have been the end of the law to them all, if they had kept it.

Some persons, who believe in the atonement, deny the doctrine of Christ's *righteousness* being imputed to the believer, as unnecessary. They say, If all his sins are atoned for by the death of Christ, he can want nothing more. If his *unrighteousness* is washed away in Christ's blood, it must of course leave him *righteous*, without any thing more being done for him. But such a mode of arguing shows a very imperfect knowledge of what *has been done* for the believer by Christ.

Man was originally placed on trial. There were two things before him:—a penalty, if he failed; a reward, if he succeeded. By his failure, he incurred the penalty,

and lost the reward. Now if a Saviour had been provided only to save him from the penalty incurred, so that he might again be placed on trial, and have another opportunity of earning the reward by his own obedience, it would have been enough for that Saviour to make atonement for man's sin. Justice would then have been satisfied, and man would have been placed *exactly where he was before*—on trial. It would still have been necessary for him to yield *perfect obedience* to God's law, in order to obtain the reward of eternal life. But this was not all for which the Saviour was given to him. By Christ's salvation man was—not to be given another opportunity of earning eternal life for himself, but to have eternal life given him. Something more than atonement was required for this. To accomplish this, not only must the *penalty* be submitted to, which man had incurred by breaking the law, but that perfect *righteousness* must be worked out, which man should have yielded in order to earn the reward. Christ would not have been “the end of the law for righteousness,” by merely bearing its curse. The law would still have been unfulfilled, and its end still unattained. Christ would then have been in the believer's stead for *suffering*, but not for *righteousness*. To be the complete Saviour He is held forth to us in the Gospel, He must do both. He must “bear our sins in his own body on the tree, being made *a curse* for us ;” and He must be “the end of the law *for righteousness* to us.” And all this He has done. “He is made unto us of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” We have righteousness by His life, redemption by His death, and sanctification by His Spirit. How fully does He answer to the title given Him in prophecy, “This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.”

My friends, we want to see more of this our *completeness* in Christ ; and we shall never have any rich spiritual enjoyment until we do. We want to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of Christ's salvation. We want to grasp more of His unsearchable riches ; to know more of our privileges as believers in Him ; to see more clearly what

an *all-sufficient* Saviour He is, what a *full* salvation He has wrought out for His people, and how *inalienably* that salvation is made over to every believer. These are just the two things required to enable us to rejoice in the Lord,—that we should know what a Saviour Christ is, and that we should know Him to be our own, our own completely, our own for ever. I am persuaded one reason why many persons, who believe in Christ, as far as they know Him, have so little happy assurance and spiritual comfort, is that they entertain such a very imperfect view of what Christ has done for them. Their feeling is, not that Christ has saved them, but that He has given them a chance of saving themselves. That would be quite true if Christ had only *died* for us, if He had only *suffered* in our stead : we should have been saved from the curse of the broken law, but still have been bound to *keep* the law *perfectly*, in order to gain eternal life. But Christ has done more than that for us. He has not merely *restored* us to the position we were in before the fall ; He has placed us in the position we *should have been in*, if we had stood the test and perfectly kept the law. He is the end of the law *for righteousness* to us. And that end of the law, which is eternal life, is as certainly ours as if we had earned it by a perfect righteousness of our own.

But how am I to know, you may ask, that *I* have any interest in all these glorious privileges ? We may answer that question by another, Do you *wish* to have any interest in them ? Do you *wish* Christ to be your own ? If so, He *is* your own, and you are His. Do not mistake me. Wishing to escape hell will never save you. Wishing to go to heaven will never save you. But wishing to have Christ for your Saviour, your *only* Saviour, because you feel the impossibility of ever being able to save yourself ; wishing to take shelter under His atonement as your only refuge from the curse of the broken law ; wishing to be clothed with the wedding-robe of His righteousness, as the only possible fulfilment of its demands which can be a ground of justification for you before God ; what is this but believing, and “believing *with the heart unto righteousness* ?” How could you wish Christ to be your Saviour

unless you believed on Him? And "he that believeth hath everlasting life." He that believeth is *in* Christ, and "there is now no condemnation" for him. "He that believeth is justified from all things:" because "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one *that believeth.*"

And is faith alone required to secure an interest in Christ? Then why all the exhortations in Scripture to good works? Because they are just the fruit which faith is to produce. They cannot help you to obtain an interest in Christ, for you must *have* an interest in Him, you must *be* united to Him by a living faith, before you *can* "walk in them." "Without me ye can do nothing." A branch does not bear fruit in order that it may be engrafted into the vine; it must *be* engrafted before it *can* bear any fruit. And you must be grafted into Christ by faith; you must secure an interest in Christ by accepting Him as He is offered to you in the Gospel, before you can have the spiritual power, the constraining motive, "to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God;" "to live, not unto yourself, but unto Him who died for you and rose again." Believe, and Live. Believe, and Love. Believe, and Rejoice. Believe, and Obey. Believe, and Work. Believe, and Magnify Christ. Believe, and Glorify God. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Thou shalt be saved now from the dominion of sin, from the power of the devil, from the bondage of this world; and thou shalt be saved hereafter from the curse of the law, and eternal condemnation. Nay, more; thou shalt "enter into the joy of *thy Lord*;" thou shalt receive the reward due to His meritorious work, "the crown of life;" the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; "the crown of *righteousness*," which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give in that day, "to *all* them that love His appearing," for He is "the end of the law for righteousness, to *every one that believeth.*"



